

The African Union-Germany Project on the Enhanced Coordination of SALW Control Initiatives in the Greater Sahel: Meeting of Donors, 15 February 2016

Introduction

On 15 February 2016, the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) held a meeting to discuss donor coordination in the field of small arms control. Co-chaired by the GFFO and the African Union, the meeting took place in Berlin and was attended by donor representatives from the G7 nations, the European Union, and Switzerland. Delegates from the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), the Small Arms Survey (SAS), and the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) were also in attendance.

The decision to gather together donors in the domain of conventional arms control was made within the framework of an ongoing project on the enhanced coordination of SALW/Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) initiatives in the Greater Sahel region. Launched in May 2015 and jointly implemented by Germany and the African Union, this project is in the process of establishing a coordination platform bringing together relevant donors, regional organizations, and implementing agencies in a series of meetings to exchange information and reduce duplication of efforts.

Morning Sessions

The donor meeting in Berlin was opened by Ambassador Baumann, Deputy Federal Commissioner for Disarmament, who explained that the aim of the meeting was to foster closer coordination between donors, in part by generating a shared understanding of individual donor priorities and projects. These sentiments were reiterated by Thomas Goebel, German Head of Division for Conventional Arms Control, and Tarek Sharif, Head of the African Union Defense and Security Division.

These opening statements were followed by a first session in which the donor representatives present shared information on their current and planned activities. During this session, European Union representative Ms. Lene Lindolt Hove noted that EU funding priorities may change as a result of ongoing revisions to the EU's Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. Japan's delegate, Mr. Seiichiro Taguchi, also pointed to the significance of the upcoming Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) which will take place in August. Finally, Mr. Tarmo Dix from the German Federal Foreign Office remarked upon Germany's openness towards the co-financing of projects with other donors.

During the second morning session, presentations were given by Mr. Wolf-Christian Paes (BICC) and Ms. Anna Alvazzi (Small Arms Survey). This session raised a number of issues on the subject of information exchange and on how information exchange should relate to joint action among donors. In this regard, Mr. Paes explained that the creation of a database of SALW/PSSM projects in the Greater Sahel is planned as part of the AU-Germany project. The meeting participants expressed support for this initiative but noted the need for such a project to be well-resourced and regularly updated. The participants also remarked that any new project database should take into account other extant initiatives, both to avoid

duplication and to minimize the burden of reporting. One suggestion was that the database should also include a calendar of relevant SALW/PSSM-related meetings.

The discussion also turned to the need to strengthen the capacities of national SALW focal points and institutions in the Greater Sahel region, and the possibility of different donors conducting joint needs assessments and subsequent planning. In a similar manner, the idea that donors and practitioners should put together a shared checklist, stipulating the required institutions and capacities that must be in place prior to a SALW intervention, was also proposed. It was also suggested that such a checklist could be attached to the existing African Union (2011) Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of SALW. The importance of conducting high-level political sensitization on SALW control within the Sahel region was also raised, not only to ensure the sustainability of SALW projects in the long-term, but also to ensure that lower-level efforts to improve small arms control receive the necessary political support.

Afternoon Sessions

Three presentations were made during the afternoon session. The first drew attention to the importance of PSSM baseline assessments and was given by Mr. Nikhil Acharya (BICC). The second presentation by Dr. Claudia Breitung (BICC) outlined and evaluated a PSSM Training of Trainers (ToT) programme jointly funded by different donors, with Germany as the lead nation. When commenting on this presentation, Mr. Goebel (GFFO) pointed to the ToT programme as a positive example of donor coordination which could perhaps be replicated in the Greater Sahel. The third and final presentation was given by Mr. Chris Loughran (MAG) who discussed MAG's current initiative to develop best practices for measuring the outcomes of PSSM projects. More generally, Mr. Loughran pointed to the benefits of integrating stakeholder mapping into interventions, while Ms. Alvazzi (Small Arms Survey) concurred with the need to invest in the monitoring and evaluation of SALW projects.

Conclusions and Next Steps

In concluding the afternoon session, Mr. Goebel (GFFO) emphasized the necessity of gathering together to share information, and his desire to move beyond information exchange into the realm of closer donor coordination. He also stressed the importance of raising the profile of PSSM at a higher political level at both home and abroad. In this regard, Mr. Goebel stated that it would be beneficial to keep the small arms control issue high on the G7 agenda. In moving forward, Mr. Goebel remarked that Germany would work towards the creation of an online information-sharing platform which would provide a means for coordination while removing the need for yet more meetings.

In terms of the next steps of the AU-Germany project, Dr. Tarek Sharif (African Union) stated that African regional organizations with a SALW mandate covering the Greater Sahel will meet together in Djibouti in May. These regional organizations will be invited to share information and discuss improved coordination in a meeting which will take place alongside the AU Regions Steering Committee on SALW and DDR. With this meeting in mind, Mr.

Goebel (GFFO) remarked that it would be useful to think about what donors would like these regional partners to contribute to the broader AU-Germany coordination process. Mr. Goebel also raised the question of whether smaller meetings should be included within the AU-Germany project, perhaps at the national level or at the level of individual regional organizations, particularly in countries or regions where small arms interventions are myriad. Finally, the meeting participants were informed that a further meeting of the coordination platform, bringing together donors, African regional organizations, and other relevant implementing agencies will take place in New York City, on Saturday 11 June, alongside the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action (BMS6).

Notable Dates

14/15 March: Wilton Park Meeting, Accra, Ghana.

31 March–1 April: MAG Roundtable on PSSM Success, Impact, and Effectiveness, London, United Kingdom.

May (date tbc): AU Regions Steering Committee Meeting on SALW and DDR, Djibouti.

11 June: AU-Germany Coordination Platform Meeting, New York City, USA.

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